



MONTANA STATE HOSPITAL POLICY AND PROCEDURE

ANIMAL VISITATION

Effective Date: June 6, 2003

Policy #: TX-21

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I. PURPOSE: To provide guidelines allowing patients to have personal visits from people bringing pets to the campus and for the use of animals as part of treatment and rehabilitation programs provided by the Hospital.

II. POLICY: The Hospital recognizes that visits from pets and other animals can provide a positive therapeutic experience for psychiatric patients and promote their psycho-social well-being.

Visitors bringing pets to the Hospital campus and the use of animals in treatment must follow the guidelines below that are intended to minimize risk of harm to others including potential allergic reactions.

This policy does not address service animals used to promote greater independence for people with disabilities (e.g., leader dog for person who is blind). Specific procedures will be developed to address situations where an individual needing a service animal is admitted to Montana State Hospital.

III. DEFINITIONS: None

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. Treatment Teams: To approve and develop guidelines for visitors requesting to bring pets to visit Hospital patients.

B. Supervisors: To authorize use of animals in Hospital treatment programs and to inform the Hospital Administrator when authorization has been granted. Supervisors are responsible for addressing any problems that arise with the use of animals in therapy programs.

V. PROCEDURE:

Personal Visits

A. Visitors may request in advance to make arrangements with treatment team members to bring a pet on a visit. Requests may be made to physicians, team leaders, nursing supervisors, or social workers. A physician's order authorizing the visit with the pet

will indicate approval. Orders do not have to be renewed for each specific visit, but may be renewed on an ongoing basis in the monthly orders.

- B. Visits involving animals will take place outdoors whenever possible. When it is important that the visit take place indoors, the designated locations where visits may occur are: 1) the alcove near the front door of the main building; 2) the visitors' room near the front desk; or 3) the visiting room on the Spratt Building. This is intended to minimize exposure by other patients or staff who may be allergic to animals. Visits involving animals may not take place in locations where food is prepared or served including the Rotunda in the Main Hospital Building.
- C. Treatment team members must inform front desk personnel of the arrangements of visits involving pets.
- D. Pets must remain under the immediate control of the visitor or patient during the visit. Pets are not permitted to run loose on the Hospital campus at any time. Pets that behave poorly or do not appear to be clean and well cared for will not be allowed to return. Visits may be terminated if problems occur.

Therapy Programs

- A. Supervisory personnel may authorize staff members or outside organizations to utilize well-behaved animals in treatment and rehabilitation programs to promote bonding and psycho-social well-being.
- B. Animals used as part of therapy programs must:
 - Be in good health as indicated by receiving regularly veterinary care
 - Be parasite free
 - Be on a flea control program
 - Have current immunizations
 - Be free of lesions or hair loss
 - Be bathed recently and have good oral hygiene
 - Have nails trimmed and filed
 - Be of appropriate temperament and behavior for use in this setting
- C. Animals used in therapy program are not permitted to roam freely, they must remain in an area designated by the supervisor.
- D. Supervisors must inform the Hospital Administrator when use of an animal has been authorized in a treatment program.
- E. Animals used in therapy are permitted only near the entryway of the main hospital building, the visitors room on the Spratt Building, the Classroom of the Program

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- F. Indications of allergic reactions in patients or staff must be reported to the Hospital's infection control nurse.
- G. Staff must respect the wishes of patients who do not want to come into contact with the animals or who may be fearful of the animals.

XII. ATTACHMENTS: None

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Thomas Gray, M.D. Date
Medical Director